

DISSENTERS

N O 1490. p. 126.

SCHISMATICKS:

O R,

Dissenting Churches O R T H O D O X.

2 Sam. vi. 22. *And I will yet be more vile than thus.*

Acts xxiv. 14. *But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call Heresie, so worship I the God of my Fathers; believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets.*

Isa. lxvi. 5. *Hear the Word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his Word: Your Brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my Name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your Joy, and they shall be ashamed.*

1 Pet. iv. 4, 5. *Wherein they think it strange, that you run not with them to the same Excess of Riot; speaking Evil of you: Who shall give account, &c.*

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L O N D O N,

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THE EPISTLE TO THE READER.

READER,

I Presume thou wilt find but few Books written on this Subject; by reason of which there comes to be so much Ignorance of what is discoursed on. To be informed in this Point seems very necessary at this Time. Our insulting Adversaries are now got upon the highest Ground, from whence they are daily Discharging their Blunderbusses against us; which, tho' not loaden with Ball, and so do us no hurt, yet their terrible Noise is ready to affright back some of Christ's faint-hearted and undisciplin'd Soldiers; who hearing this great Sound, stand amaz'd, saying, Men, and Brethren, are these Things so? Being concerned to hear the Ways and People of God almost every where spoken against, yea rail'd against, I am willing to put to my Hand (being set for the Defence of the *2 Sam. 6. 6.* Gospel) to help to bear up the Ark of God, now the Beasts do thus shake it.

I am sensible, we have in our Company, Men of greater Abilities, and better skill'd in this military Discipline, to rally Christ's shatter'd Forces, than I am; but the strongest Men have not always the best Courage; these will oft sit at home, and spy the ill Conduct of others, rather than venture an Encounter.

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But who can tell, for once, what a Stripling may do in so good a Cause? Who can tell, but by some of those smooth Stones I have chosen, I may wound the Heads, or at least smite through the Joints of the Harness of those Heaven-daring Goliaths, who are bidding Defiance to the whole Armies of the living God? While some, even of my Brethren, may be ready to say to me, as David's eldest Brother, 1 Sam. 17. 28. And his Anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few Sheep in the Wilderness? I know thy Pride, and the Naughtiness of thine Heart. And yet this Man was made the Instrument of their Deliverance. Had he been as cowardly as they were, what had become of 'em all.

The World knows we have Men among us can speak well, yet many are too mealy mouth'd to plead in such a Cause as this; especially in such a Day as this. Yet who can justly blame any for not helping to pull down a House which they may design to live in, or at least to take shelter in, when a stormy Day comes.

But some will say, If you are a Man of such Courage, why are you afraid to prefix your Name to your Book?

I answer, If I have conceal'd my Name, I have not conceal'd my Judgment. But know, 'tis not Fear that hath made me do this. For as I do not know of any Thing that I have wrote, that may justly displease any; so neither do I fear such as may be angry without a Cause. So long as I have Truth on my side, I shall not fear the Faces of Men. He is unworthy the Name of a Christian, much more of a Minister of Christ, who can bear the ways of God ridicul'd, and not open his Mouth in Defence of 'em.

Nor is it always enough to defend the Truth in our Pulpits. Our chief Accusers will not vouchsafe to give us the bearing there; tho' many of ours (poor easie Souls) can at Times sit under them patiently, to bear the Ways and People of God reviled; and themselves and dear Friends anathematized: For which Sin they must answer to God one Day.

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But I have concealed my Name, to the End, that the unworthiness of the Author, may not cause Prejudice in the Reader; well knowing, how Mens Writings are valued from their Names. If therefore any think good to answer what I have written, I desire em, not to put the Reader to charge about the want of a Name; but rather speak home to the Matter that they do know, than to cast Reflections on him whom they do not know. Let them in mild Terms, as those that contend for the Truth (and not as Men striving for a Party) endeavour to set forth the Truth in a clearer Light. And if by solid Arguments I can see my Mistake, I will soon retract what I have written. I have a Soul to be saved, and hope I shall always be willing to be further enlightened into what may tend to its present, or future Good.

I never was so bigotted to a Party, as only to hear what could be said by them, or for them. Yea, I have with as much delight read, or heard what was contrary to my Judgment, as what hath been agreeable thereto; to the end, that if I was in a Mistake, I might thereby be convinced of my Error; or if not, to be the more confirm'd in the Truth. If therefore, I, or any that read, may get any true Light into the Point in hand, by this, or any solid Answer which this may provoke unto, I am content.

If the Dissenters are as faulty in their separating from the publick Worship, as they are represented, I heartily wish we may all speedily return; but if not faulty, I earnestly desire our Accusers may be convinced, before it is too late, of all their hard Speeches against us. For as he must be a wicked Person that justly falls under a Church's Censure; so that Church must be as wicked, that censures any one without a Cause. He that justifies the Wicked, and he that condemns the Just, even they both are Abomination to the LORD, Prov. 17. 15.

Should these despised People be found (after all) to be the People of God, and their Way of Worship to be the purest Worship; how will our Accusers Mouths be stoppt in the great Day? Christ takes what is spoken against his People,

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People, as spoken against himself. I wish therefore, I could appease our noisie Accusers; by the Advice of Gamaliel, *Acts* 5. 38, 39. And now I say unto you, refrain from these Men, and let them alone; for if this Counsel, or this Work be of Men, it will come to nought: But if it is of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

All I shall add, shall be this: Could I have found any Thing published on this Subject that had given me full Satisfaction, it should have prevented this; but finding some giving away the Cause, instead of defending it; others afraid to speak plain; for this Reason I have complied with the urgent Request of some, to publish this.



Farewel.

Dif-

Dissenters no Schismatics :

O R,

Dissenting CHURCHES

ORTHODOX.

HERESIE and Schism have been the common Odiums with which the Saints and People of God have been branded from Generation to Generation ; with the former by the Papists, with the latter by some nominal Protestants. And as these Charges differ not much the one from the other, so, if I mistake not, our Accusers differ as little, as the things whereof they accuse us. Scarce ever was there a greater Out-cry against Schism than now ; and for ought I know, there may be some Cause ; but that which is more to be bewailed, and like to do more Mischief than even Schism it self, is that great Ignorance there seems to be among People of all Persuasions, of the Nature of the Thing, by reason of which, few are able to make a right Judgment, whether they are guilty, or not guilty. If some would forbear their scurrilous and unchristian like Reflections, and instead thereof truly shew what Schism is, perhaps the Offence might cease. But to condemn any without a Trial, is contrary to Law and Gospel ; and looks as if such rash Judges were more desirous of an Occasion for such a Censure, than to prevent it.

DISSENTERS are singled out from all others, as the Butts to shoot at ; nor can Innocency it self defend them from this Charge, but right or wrong, Schismatics they must be. And, O ! that damnable Sin of Schism ! And yet after all, instead of reclaiming such as are gone from them, they daily (by this means) lose more ; which gives any rational Man ground to think, that either the Persons they exclaim at are not guilty of what

what is charged upon them, or else that the Means they use to reclaim them are very indirect.

— This brings to mind a comical Passage, with which I'll divert the Reader. A Fool that I well knew, (quite a Natural Fool) was sent by his Father, a little before Harvest, to a neighbouring Town with a Basket, to fetch home a Brood of Chickens; as he was coming through the standing Corn, the Basket not being close enough, one of them got out at a Hole, and ran into the standing Corn; the Fool first tried to call it back, but the Chicken liking the standing Corn better than to be cramped up in a Basket, would not come; the Fool then, to shew his Wit, opens the Basket, with a Resolve to force it in; after it he goes, in a great Rage, mean while all the rest got out, and so he lost the whole Brood, and came home as wise as he went.

But perhaps our Adversaries care not whither we run, if they can but hereby advance themselves, as doubtless they hope they shall, we living in a Day when we call the Proud happy. Yea, *They that work Wickedness, are set up, and they that tempt God are even deliver'd,* as in *Mal. 3. 15.* And especially, having an Instance of late, of one, who by the same means was advanced from the Dunghill to great Honour. But let such know, tho' we have a single Instance of one such advanced by Men; yet we have a Scripture Instance of one hanged on a Gallows Fifty Cubits high, who not more deserved it than the former. From which different Event, 'tis yet doubtful what the End of such Endeavours will be. *Tempora mutantur & nos mutamur in illis.*

So much Time is spent by some in preaching down, or rather crying down Schism, that they scarce have time to preach against other Sins, as if no other Sins would damn but Schism. O Schism! Schism! That dreadful, damnable, and unpardonable Sin of Schism! Whoring, Swearing, Drunkenness, &c. are but venial Sins, and meer Peccadilloes, if compared to Schism, in the Judgment of some Men. And much more Charity they have for, Love to, and Acquaintance with such as are guilty of these, if they will but own themselves Sons of the Church, than for those that are departed from them, tho' they have none of those Plague-Spots appearing upon them.

Now when Things are thus, it highly concerns us to enquire into the Nature of the Thing; that if we are guilty, as they represent us, we may be truly humbled, and return; if not, that we may be able to put to rebuke Gain-sayers, or at least, may satisfy our Conscience, and be able to give a Reason to him that asketh us. For I cannot but fear, that many of our Dissenters are as ignorant of the Nature of what they are accused



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self, as their Accusers, by reason whereof they come to be affrighted with meer Shadows.

I shall therefore for this once fall in with the Times, and help to preach down that damnable Sin of Schism. And that I may not seem to write any Thing useles, or to plow my Ground with other Mens Heifers, I shall carefully begin where they have left off. And therefore, as they have done well in shewing the dreadfulnes of the Sin, and the heavy Judgments which they must expect in this World, and that which is to come, who are justly chargeable herewith; so I shall say but little of these, but bend my Mind to set forth the Nature of the Thing, in as plain and intelligible a Style as possible, that so the weakest may understand it; it being for their sakes that I write this.

I cannot well expect herein to please all Men; no, nor all my dissenting Brethren. For as in the Publick, some are High-Church, and some Low-Church; so among our selves, we have some for a total Separation, and we have some of a mungrel Kind, that are for Occasional Communion: Such are not for going so far off, but that they may be within Call, if need be. Some have already intreated Favour with others, when they could find none among us. And what maternal Affections have they found, while among those they have been promoted to some little Honour, who by Reason of their weak Abilities, or rather scandalous Lives, were justly grown into Contempt where they had been? From whence I see, tho' those from whom we dissent may sometime give us a hard Word, they have yet some little kindness for the very worst of us.

The kind Reception of some hath been so gratefully represented by some others, that they will not open their Mouths against those kind Benefactors; nor by their good Will would they suffer others; not knowing what occasion they may have to follow those Forerunners. Nor shall I wonder, if I have the first Answer from some of those.

But we have some among us that are *Israelites* indeed, who are for walking in all God's Ordinances blameless; some that know Christ's Voice, and will not follow a Stranger; some that don't seek to please Men, but God. To these I chiefly direct my Discourse, as being Dissenters indeed; not doubting of whatsoever Denomination they are, but those that thus love the Truth, will be glad to hear it defended; and if I can but be serviceable to these, the rest will shift for themselves. The general Heads I shall speak to shall be these.

I. I shall lay down some Propositions touching the Nature of Schism.

II. Shew what a true Gospel Church is, the departing from which may render such guilty of Schism.

B

III. Shew

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III. Shew what it is that constitutes a Person a Member of such a particular Church, so as that his departing from it, or not holding Communion with it, may be Schism.

IV. Shew you under a distinct Head what Schism is.

I. *Proposition.* All Separation from a Church, or Publick Worship, is not Schism. As 'tis the Cause, not the Punishment that makes a Martyr; so 'tis either the Purity of the Church we depart from, or the manner of our departing, that makes us Schismatics. If a Church, to which we do belong, grows Heterodox, and departs from Gospel Rules; or we are enabled to see more clearly into its Errors, than heretofore; our peaceable departing from such a Church, to join with a better, doth not carry in it the least shew of Schism. A Church that God is departed from, or rather, never was present in, we may depart from without Schism. If God is so departed from a Church, that we see little of his sanctifying Presence, and as little of his converting Presence, 'tis high time to think of removing to another Church, *And to be Followers of God as dear*

Children, Eph. 5. 1. And as the living Creatures, Ezek. 1. 19. and the Wheels went together, so we are to mind the Motion of the Wheels, and when those go, we must go, and shall go, if we are spiritually alive. To what end should we stay in a Church where God is not? What are Ordinances without God?

'Tis observable, that in the Tabernacle Worship of Old, the Cloud was to them the Token of God's Presence; and 'tis said, Num. 9. 22, 23. *Or whether it were Two Days, or a Month, or a Year that the Cloud tarried upon the Tabernacle, remaining thereon, the Children of Israel abode in their Tents, and journeyed not: But when it was taken up, they journeyed. At the Commandment of the LORD they rested in their Tents, and at the Commandment of the LORD they journeyed: They kept the Charge of the LORD, at the Commandment of the LORD by the Hand of Moses.* Note, God's removing from them, carried in it the Nature of a Charge, and a Command to them to follow. And if this is a Rule, it seems high time for us to depart. For where is there any Thing like the converting Presence of God in the Church we separate from? I do profess, I never knew one Soul converted there in all my Life. Nay, a Church Parson told me, they did not expect any such Thing as Conversion: From such a Church the Lord deliver me. Don't we find, that if by any Providence any are awakened about their State, the next Thing commonly is, they are gone to the Meetings. Nay, is not God as much a Stranger there, as to his comforting Presence? To talk of the Presence of God in Ordinances, they look upon it as mere Cant. Nay, a great Man among them we dissent from, scoffing at the Spiritual Comforts some have in Ordinances, tells us in his Book, that a Dose of Physick will

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will produce the same Effect. How well such Men are acquainted with the Comforts of the Spirit, judge ye. Another of the publick Ministers told me, an Organ was of great use to revive one troubled for Sin.

Nor are we only called by these secret Whispers to separate from such a Church, but we have positive Commands in the Old and New Testament to separate from some, even in points of Worship, back'd with sad Instances of God's severe Judgments on such as have not. To name some few, see *Isa. 52. 11, 12. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean Thing, go ye out of the midst of her; and adds, The LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your re-reward.* Observe, how there is a Promise that God would go before them, and behind, to guide and protect 'em. And that it was a Separation in point of Worship, seems evident from these Words, *Be ye clean that bear the Vessels of the LORD.* An Instance of Judgments inflicted for not separating, you have, *Numb. 10. 26, 32. Depart I pray you from the Tents of these wicked Men.* And because they did not, 'tis said, *v. 32. The Earth opened her Mouth, and swallowed them up, and their Houses, and all the Men that appertained unto Korah.* And that this was for not separating in point of Worship, is clear, from *v. 9, 10.*

The New Testament is as clear in this Point; *2 Cor. 6. 17, 18. Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD. And touch no unclean Thing, and I will receive you.* And promises, *I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sons and Daughters.* And that this Command of separating was in point of Worship, is clear from *v. 16. And what Agreement hath the Temple of the Lord with Idols?* The Example of Judgments for not separating, see *Acts 5. 26. For before these Days, rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody, to whom a number of Men, about Four Hundred, joined themselves, and was slain, and all, as many as obeyed him were scattered, and brought to nought.*

Thus you see, that some Separation is Lawful, and so can't be Schism. Nay, some Separation is commanded, and so a Duty. And they that will deny what I have been proving under this Head, will, for ought I can see, bring the whole Nation under the Charge of Schism; especially those that are our greatest Accusers, in separating from the Church of Rome; unless they can wipe off the Reproach, by saying, (as I believe with a safe Conscience they may) that they are not so far departed from the Church of Rome, as some think they are. I confess, I never thought *Luther*, or his Followers Schismatics. The Idolatrous, and Superstitious Worship of the Church of Rome, will sufficiently justify from such a Charge. When the Papists have challenged the Protestants to prove where there Church was before *Luther*, I can't find that ever they have proved they were a separate Church, but a true Church in them, as Chaff

and Wheat, tho' of a different Kind, yet both make but one heap till separated.

Now how unreasonable, and unscriptural, is it, Mat. 7. 4; 5. for any to pretend to *pluck the Mote out of their Brothers Eye, when there is a Beam in their own?* Christ calls such Hypocrites, for all their Zeal. How unfair to charge us with Schism, in separating from them for great Matters, when they themselves have separated from others for much smaller, and yet think themselves Innocent; yea, when we ourselves are Witnesses that they are so?

Objection. But here is no Comparison between us and you: Ours was a Separation from Popery, yours from Protestants.

Answer. How far the Comparison will hold good, I shall forbear to mention; yet certain it is, from hence, that since all Separation is not sinful, ours ought to be duly weighed with some Grains of allowance before it is condemned, or we rejected as reprobate Silver.

But I further Answer, I doubt not but in the Church of *Rome*, there is something more Praise-worthy, than some Things among us Protestants.

I am not for crying down, or crying up any Party by the Lump, there being something good among all Professors. I hope it will offend none, to say, that some of the Prayers of the Church of *Rome*, are better than the Oaths, and horrid Execrations of our prophane Protestants, tho' in the mean time, Sons of the Church. Nor do I think a Mass-house worse than a Whore-house. If then, it is lawful to separate from the Church of *Rome*, where there then was, and now is something good; methinks it should cause those very Persons to be more mild in their Censures against us, for separating from a Church where there is so much Evil tolerated; but these, like the Eye, can see every Thing but it self.

But if after all, we must still be branded as Schismatics, it may afford us some Comfort under so heavy a Charge, to think who our Accusers are. One comforted himself, that tho' some spake Evil of him, yet that they were evil Men that spake it. 'Tis a general Observation I have made, that if we can but find a publick Minister that is Orthodox in the Faith, a good Preacher, one that is Sober, and just in his Dealings, this Man is a lover of the Dissenters, and bewails that there is such cause given for their Separation. But if on the other Hand, we find, (as we easily may) one that is a lover of his Pleasures more than a lover of God, one that preaches poorly, and lives much worse than he preaches; one that is *vox & preterea nihil*, all Voice; one that frequently washes his venomous Mouth, after he comes out of his Pulpit on a Sabbath Day, with a Pint of Brandy, or a few Bottles of good old Sherry, at a publick Inn, or Tavern, this is the Man that brands us with Schism; and seldom

seldom doth he so much wish our Confusion, as when he is drinking his own. And since these are the Men, and this is the Time, we may hope it may not be so bad with us as they affirm; and that this Charge may rather arise from the *delirium* of their own intoxicated Brain, than any Sin in us. There is a Word pronounced against us, when all Men speak well of us, *Luke 6. 26.* And since we must have the ill Word of some, I think it had as good be the ill Word of these Men, as of any that have a Tongue in their Heads. Could we but lay the Reins loose, and run into the same Excess of Riot, we should certainly have a better Word, tho' we seldom came at their Place of Worship.

2. *Proposition.* A Person may continue in a Church, and yet be guilty of Schism. For as I have shewn, a Person may depart from a Church, and be Innocent; so now I am to shew, how a Person may continue in a Church, and seem a great stickler for that Church, and yet be far more guilty than he that is totally departed from it. 'Tis said, *1 Cor. 12. 26.* no Schism [*in*] the Body, not [*from*] the Body. Schism is a Rent, but as a Garment may be rent, tho' not quite in Twain; so a Church may be rent, though the Members like a ragged Garment may hang together. If we consider the Signification of the Word, and how 'tis us'd in Scripture, it will give light into the Point in Hand. Saith *Leigh*, in his *Critica Sacra*, the Word *Σχίσμα*, signifies Dissention, or Division; and indeed, frequently in the New Testament, what in the *English* is render'd Division, is in the Greek Schism, *1 Cor. 1. 10.* No Divisions among you, in the Greek, *μὴ ἢ ἐν ὑμῖν σχίσματα*, that there may be no Schisms among you. So *John 7. 43.* There was a Division. The Word is *Σχίσμα*, a Schism. From whence it plainly appears, that where the Members of a Church are divided, and of different Minds, they may be guilty of Schism, tho' they never design to depart from that Church. Now a Church may be divided, and of different Minds, two Ways; either as to Practice, or Opinion.

1. As to Practice, as when some of the Members can allow themselves in such sinful and abominable Practices as the rest cannot. As for instance, suppose, when the Minister and some of the Church are met on the Lord's Day, in the publick Worship of God, some belonging to the same Church, should at the same time be at a Whore-house, or but at an Ale-house, drinking a Bumper to the Church's Health, and utter Confusion of all such as dissent from her; is not this Schism with a Vengeance, and as bad to be as at a Meeting at the same time? Or,

2. As

2. As to Opinion, or Difference in Judgment. Suppose, in a Church there is a fixed Number of Articles of Faith, be they Thirty Nine, or Forty, more or less, which at first all the Church received, and all the Ministers successively afterward have sworn to, or subscribed; suppose Election from all Eternity, Predestination, &c. were some of these Articles; and yet after all, these are neither believed, nor preached by some, yea, preached against, and those lookt upon by them as that Church's most mortal Enemies, who do stedfastly cleave to 'em, and constantly preach 'em; is not this Schism? For tho' every little Difference in Opinion will not justly expose to this Charge, where Peace and Purity are maintained, yet such as strike at the very Fundamentals of Religion, can't in the Judgment of wise Men, be lookt upon as Friends to that Church.

Such different Practices and Opinions in a Church, must needs be much more injurious to the Welfare of such a Church, and dishonouring to God, than a peaceable departing from it can be supposed to be, in the Judgment of all, but

2 Cor. 4. 4. such as the God of this World hath blinded, and Sin hath stupified. It would be far better for such a Church to have such Members separated at the greatest Distance from it, rather than to remain in it; for tho' those may cry up their excellent Constitution, till they have made themselves hoarse, yet they take the direct way to ruin it, for faith Christ, *Mat. 12. 25. Every City, or House, divided against it self shall not stand.*

I have often wonder'd what makes such Persons cry up a Church, and especially to make the greatest Noise for it, who either come so little at it, or whose walk is so injurious to it, and who in Faith and Practice differ so much from it. And I conceive, the most likely Reason, why they admire it, and yet are such a Discredit to it, is, because of its Mildness, and Gentleness to them, in suffering such scandalous Members as they are to remain in it; and that the Church is so charitable, as not to censure them, because they happen to be drunk two or three times in a Week; nor to debar them from the Lord's Supper upon the account of such human Failings; and finding no Church like minded, they conclude this is the only Church for them; and really who can blame them? one good Turn deserves another. It would be strange to see a disobedient Child to fly in the Face of the Parent that never controuled the Child, and especially so to do, because the Parent was so gentle.

Or, if any other Reason can be assign'd, why such as are so far departed from the Faith of a Church, should yet so much cry up and admire that Church, it may be on the account of the Profits and Advantage they reap from that Church, having undoubted Ground to conclude, that if that Constitution was subverted, the World would not produce another, in which they would

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would be honoured with such Titles, and enriched with such Benefices, especially, unless their Lives were Reformed, which there is little ground to hope ever will.

From all which it appears, how a Person may remain in a Church, and be guilty of Schism, while he that departs from the same, may be innocent: By comparing of which, you may see, who are most guilty, the Dissenters, or their Accusers.

II General Head, is, To shew what a true Gospel Church is, to depart from which may render such guilty of Schism. Whether that may be called a Church, which is defective in great measure, as he may be call'd a Man, that wants Eyes to see, or Feet to walk, or Hands to work, I shall not now determine; but shall speak of such a Church as we may lawfully join with, or cannot depart from, without being guilty of Schism. For I am hard to believe, that ever God will charge it on any as Schism, to leave a Church that is corrupt, to join with one more pure, tho' as yet not wholly without Spot or Wrinkle; and if God will not, Men ought not.

If we have a Garment to make that is costly, we take care to get a good Workman to make it, and are not willing to have it spoil'd by a Bungler. If we are sick, especially have any dangerous Distemper, we are careful to get a skilful Physician, lest he kill us, instead of curing us. If we are to remove our Habitation, we enquire whether the Air is wholesome, and good, and suitable to our Constitution. If we go into the Market to buy Food, we are careful to chuse the best, and that which is sound, and will nourish us. Yea, if we want but a Servant to do our meanest Work, we are careful to chuse one that is skilful and faithful, and neither ~~idiot~~ nor ~~Chief~~. And can they be justly blamed, who take as much care of the Soul, as they do of the Body? As the Body is more than Raiment, so the Soul is more than both: The Edification and Salvation of our Souls, are the greatest Concerns we have in this World, however slighted and disregarded by many. And yet 'tis the great Unhappiness of many, they have no Liberty to make choice of an able and faithful Minister, for the good of their precious and immortal Souls, without exposing themselves to the Charge of Schism; which rather than some ignorant, yet well meaning People, will do, contrary to their Interest, and Conscience, feed on Husks all their Days.

Many live in Parishes where their Parsons are notoriously wicked; Swearers, Drunkards, &c. and tho' they abominate such Practices, yet can by no means reform them, nor help themselves, but are forced to remain, *even as* *Sheep not having a Shepherd.* They are put into Mark 6. 34. the Living by such and such Patrons, and let them

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get them out that can. Nay, perhaps they have bought them, and so can no more be depriv'd of them than of their free Land, however vicious in their Lives, or unsound in their Doctrine. 'Tis owing in great measure to this, that there are so many Dissenters; nor will there (I hope) be ever fewer, so long as those gross Abominations do remain. If the Governours and Rulers of such a Church would but (instead of falling so foully on us

for dissenting) imitate Christ, and by a small John 2. 15. Scourge drive those Buyers and Sellers out of their Synagogues, whose filthy Feet have so defiled them, they would do that which would tend more to the Honour of God, and that Church, and for the reducing such as are departed from it, than all their loud and repeated Anathema's against us as Schismaticks can do; for we are not easily scared with Words.

The Dissenters (as great Fools as they are esteemed by some) have yet so much Sense as to know, that *Cuculla non facit Monachum*, that a Hood don't make a Monk, nor a Gown a Minister. They know a Wall, tho' it be whited, and can sometimes discern the Devil, when wrapt up in a good old Prophet's Mantle. They don't so much mind what Garment he wears, as they do what manner of Life he lives, and what Doctrine he preaches. They love to be under the Guidance of one that will go with them, yea, go before them, and not turn to the Left Hand, while they bid them turn to the Right. They don't approve of blind Seers. And if any Dissenters are otherwise minded, I dissent from those Dissenters, and look upon 'em as no Credit to our Cause.

I come therefore to shew, what a Gospel Church is; and this I shall shew, First, *Negatively*: Secondly, *Positively*.

1. *Negatively*. Not a material Building of Wood and Stone. Thousands cry up, the Church! the Church! and understand nothing else by the Church but the Place of Worship. The very Owls and Jackdaws, may be as truly said to belong to such a Church, as they. I have really that Opinion of the Preachers in those Places, to believe they know other things, tho' they may not think meet to inform the People; well knowing that this gross Mistake of theirs has done more towards filling their Congregations than ever their Preaching has done. For to me it seems impossible, for any that hath read the Greek Testament, and understands what he reads, ever to be possess'd with such a childish and ridiculous Idea of a Gospel Church.

I confess, these publick Places are very convenient, and do think 'tis great Pity they are no better supply'd. 'Tis a gross Mistake, to think we have any Prejudice against the Place, or make it any Scruple of Conscience to hear of to preach there, if that was all; but to say that these are Gospel Churches, is such ridiculous Nonsense, as we should be utterly

terly ashamed of. The Word *Ἐκκλησία* always signifies the People met together, and never (as I can find) the Place where such People were met. Yea, how absurd and ridiculous would it be, to understand it so in many Places. Christ is said to purchase his Church with his own Blood, *Acts* 20. 28. Was that the Place? If so, never blame the Papists for baptizing their Bells, since they brought so many to the Church. 'Tis said, *Acts* 15. 3. they were brought on their Way by the Church: What did the Church move? I should really think that Church was [in d—r.] Again, we read of a Church in a House, *1 Cor.* 16. 19. To be sure that was a Low-Church. We read of saluting the Church, *Acts* 18. 22. of writing to the Church, *John* 3. 9. of speaking to the Church, *Mat.* 18. 19. He that in these Texts (by the Church) can understand the Building, let him. I hope we have no such senseless Drones among us. So that, tho' these Places are convenient for Worship, yet by no means are these to be called Gospel-Churches, it being that which the Scripture knows nothing of.

2. *Positively*, To shew what a Gospel Church is. And this must be known by the Marks or Notes of a Church. And here I shall not trouble you with what the Papists make Notes of a true Church, but such as I think all true Protestants are agreed in, even Conformists as well as Non-conformists. 1. Pure Preaching the Word. 2. Due Administration of the Seals of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. 3. The regular Use of Discipline. It would be tedious to quote the Authors that are of this mind. Some indeed think, the last may be left out, as being comprehended under the former, of a due Administration of the Seals.

Now where any of those are wanting, it can be no Schism to depart from such a Church; nay, I think it may be question'd, whether that can or ought to be called a Church, that is wanting in those, or any of those Essentials of a Gospel Church. But suppose it is; yet as a House may be a House, tho' so decay'd and out of repair, that a Man cannot live in it without manifest Hazard of his Life, and so ought, for Self-preservation, to seek out for a safer Dwelling; so, a Church may be call'd a Church (perhaps) which is so deviated from the Apostolical Pattern, that it may not be consistent with true Wisdom, or Safety to our Souls, to continue longer in it; especially when one far better is at hand to be had. For Soul-concern is so exceeding great, that we ought not to venture where one may possibly be laved, but to walk where there is the least Danger of being lost. And those that love to sail among Rocks, let 'em be aware of splitting at last. The Way to Heaven is narrow at best, we had not need to make it yet narrower. A sincere Soul finds the best of Preaching, the best Praying, and the best Company, all little enough to help him forward. I come therefore now to speak
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more particularly to the forenamed Notes of a true Church.

1st. Note, is the faithful and pure Preaching of the Word: and where this is not, there can be no true Church. The Churches are called Candlesticks, because from them the glorious Light of Gospel Truth is to shine forth; and they are Golden Candlesticks too, not Wood, to denote their Purity. And if the Truth, as it is in Jesus, is not maintained, we must expect, that either Christ will remove such Candlesticks, or walk no more among 'em. As God is a God of Truth, so he will not own any as his Churches, who do not hold the Truth; it being one End of his instituting Churches, that the Gospel might be preached therein, for the Conversion of Sinners, and Edification of Saints; as is plain from Eph. 4. 11, 12, 13. *And he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets and Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ, till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God.* Hence the Apostle exhorts Titus to avoid false Doctrine, Titus 2. 7, 8. So, 1 Tim. 4. 16. *Take heed unto thy self, and unto thy Doctrine.* As Christ is the great Prophet of his Church, so we are to preach up his Laws without making any of our own. Hence the Church of God is said to be the Pillar and Ground of Truth, 1 Tim. 3. 15. So Eph. 2. 20. *And are built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone.* So that you see Gospel Truth is the very Foundation of a Church.

The Church of Rome is very corrupt in Doctrine; they hold Transubstantiation, Human Satisfaction; they pray to Saints, &c. for which Cause we separate from 'em; and by the same Rule ought to separate from all others who have forsaken the Truth. Christ commands, Mark 4. 24. *Take heed what ye hear.* There is no Church, I confess, tho' never so erroneous, but pretend to maintain and defend the Truth. The Papists have put even Protestants to Death as Hereticks. The French call their King the *Most Christian King*. Others have as high an Opinion that they are in the Truth; and 'tis to be supposed, Men would not make such a Profession, unless they did think themselves in the right Way. But as Truth is but one, and it is impossible for such as really differ in their Sentiments to be all sound in the Faith; so this should make us look the more carefully to our own Principles, and to be the more tender in censuring all that may differ from us. Too many take things upon trust, and rather believe things to be true, because the Church to which they belong believes them, than because the Word of God will prove them; and so, sometimes happen on the Truth by chance. Saith Christ, John 5. 39. *Search the Scriptures;—and they are they which testify of me.* It was the Commendation of those noble Bereans, Acts 17. 11. *that they searched the Scripture daily, whether those things were so:*

Many.

or, dissenting Churches Orthodox. 19

Many, instead of preaching Christ and the Doctrine of Free Grace, spend most of their time in Railing against those that differ from them, and crying up their own Constitution, like those Idolaters, *Acts 19. 24 to 28.* They cried, Great was *Diana*, because they liv'd by making her Silver Shrines. 'Tis easy to see what Spirit such Men are led by, and what Principle they act from.

Nay, are there not some, and those generally the same, who disown some of their own Articles; calling them rather Articles of Peace, than Articles of Faith. If those Articles were not true, why did they subscribe to them? If true, why do they disown any of them?

Let me add; when our Divines make the Preaching of the Truth a Note of a true Church, we can scarce understand 'em, as if they meant any Truths; but the most weighty Truths of the Gospel; for the Devil himself hath own'd some Truths, tho' the Father of Lies, *Luke 4. 34. I know thee who thou art, the holy One of God.* I can scarce believe there is a Church on Earth, but doth embrace some Truths.

Should a Minister spend most of his time in proving the Being of a God, or that the World was created, and not Eternal, and that it is the Heavens and not the Earth that moves: could he shew exactly how high *Babel* was before the Builders were confounded, or what the Locusts and wild Honey were that *John* did eat: could he prove exactly how long *Goliath's* Sword was, &c. tho' these things might chance to be true, yet these alone will scarce prove that to be a true Church. Yea, I will suppose him to make up the rest of his Time in preaching up Moral Duties, as, to wrong no Man, to pay every Man his Due; for tho' these are true, yet they are such Truths, as the very Heathens have believed and practis'd, who never knew what was necessary to be known to Salvation; and so cannot be an infallible Mark of a true Church. Therefore, when they make the Preaching of Truth a Mark of a true Church, they doubtless mean such Truths as are necessary to Salvation; such as Free Justification by the Righteousness of Christ, the Necessity of Faith and Holiness; and that 'tis by the Spirit's free and powerful Agency that we do these; that we endeavour to let every Man know the Plague of his own Heart, his Need of Christ, and his miserable and undone State without him.

Yea further, I will suppose, that such as make the Preaching of Truth to be a Note of a true Church, do understand, not only that the Truths preached are weighty, but that they are *preached* indeed, and not only transcribed out of Authors: or that the Hearers should be limited to a certain and small Number of Sermons. This is to deal by Men worse than Children, who are always suffer'd to take out of their Lesson, when they have got it by heart. Must Prayer and Preaching both be turned in-

to Forms ? I cannot see how the Reading a Sermon over in a Pulpit, stolen out of other Mens Works, can be called Preaching.

I know a Gentleman, a *Londoner*, that was wont once a Year to go into the Country to see some Friends, if I mistake not, at *Whisfuntide* ; and for some Years together heard the Minister always on that Text, *Prov. 24. 30, 31. I went by the Field of the Slothful, and by the Vineyard of the Man void of Understanding, and lo it was all grown over with Thorns.* The Gentleman perceiving the Text to be so weighty and copious, concluded he had been upon it several Years ; till he enquired of his Friends, who told him it fell in always on that Day in course. Thus as a blind Horse in a Mill goes his Rounds, and never goes out of his Path ; so do some Men in their Discourses, for I dare not call it Preaching. Such, sure, must needs be short-sighted, that are thus frained for Matter, when God's Commands are so exceeding broad. How ignorant must such Hearers be of many Divine Truths ? But, poor Souls ! they don't desire too much Preaching ; they are like People, like Priests ; they love to have the Parson stand to his Text, and not venture too far into new Matter, lest something at one time or other should happen to touch their guilty Consciences. Saith Christ, *Mat. 15. 14. Let them alone, they be blind Leaders of the Blind ; and if the Blind lead the Blind, both shall fall into the Ditch.*

To give some Men their Due, I must own them to be well adorned with Human Literature, Men of excellent Parts and great Learning ; yet, I think they have the least Occasion for it, and make the least Use of it, of any Men of that honourable Function under Heaven. It seems pity to spend so much Time and Money, to acquire such a Measure of Learning, and after all, to make but little better Use of it, than to transcribe an *English* Author, or now and then to rack their Wits to make a Discourse on some Occasion, when they can't find one ready compos'd that has Venom enough in it. Let these no more blame Men for entering into the Ministry with little or no Learning, for the Difference between not having and not using it, seems not much to me, except in this, the latter will have the more dreadful Account to give. For 'tis said, *Luke 12. 47. And that Servant that knew his Lord's Will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his Will, shall be beaten with many Stripes.*

Nothing can encourage unlearned Men more to preach than this. Scarce ever did I know any undertake that Work, but were able to do thus much ; tho' I am perswaded many of them have no need of it, and have more Honesty in them than to be guilty of such notorious Book-theft.

2d Note of a true Church, is the due Administration of the Seals of the Covenant, Baptism and the Lord's Supper ; where these are wanting, or unduly administered, it can be no Schism

to depart from that Church, to go to one where they are.

n. Baptism. I don't design to enlarge on this, it being a controverted Point; but this I'll venture to say, (and if any dislike it, let them attribute it to my Weakness, when they have confuted it) I never yet could see how all the Children born in this Nation could have a Right to that Ordinance. All Right to that Ordinance must be either Personal, or Parental. A Personal Right (I conceive) is that which arises from our Relation to Christ, and Covenant-Interest in him; and for any to partake of this Ordinance, who are adult, without this, is but like sealing a Blank Bond. Now this personal Right may be known, either by a visible holy Conversation, or by a verbal Declaration of a Work of Grace wrought in us. But Infants being incapable of both, cannot come in upon this Claim. A Parental Right, is that which arises from our being born of Parents, one of which, at least, hath a personal Right himself: *Nil datur quod in se non habet*. God made the Promise to believing Abraham, and to his Seed; and the Apostle tells us, if we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's Seed, and Heirs according to Promise. And saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. 7. 14. *For the unbelieving Husband is sanctified by the Wife, and the unbelieving Wife is sanctified by the Husband; else were your Children unclean, but now are they holy*. From whence it appears, that where both the Parents are notoriously wicked, as is too often to be seen, those Children can have no more Right to Baptism upon their Parents account, than the Children of Heathens.

But some may object, that all the Jewish Children were circumcised, and no doubt but many of 'em had wicked Parents; and if so, why may not the Children of wicked Parents as well be baptized?

To which I answer: May we not as well argue thus? Zipporah circumcised a Child, *ergo* Women may baptize. Let us suppose some Children of ungodly Parents circumcised, yet it will not follow, that such ought to be baptized. If such were circumcised, without a Command, it was sinful in them that circumcised them, and so no Precedent to us. But suppose they were circumcised pursuant to a Divine Command; yet it doth not follow, that all Children ought now to be baptiz'd. The Church was then in its Infancy, but is now come to greater Maturity. Several Things were practised under that Dispensation, which are laid aside as useless under our Gospel Day. They had their Sacrifices of slain Beasts, but we have none; they had a High Priest, but we have none; and why is it? But because the New Testament requires no such Thing. So, as to the Point in hand, as we are under a New Testament Dispensation, so we are to walk by the Rules thereof. If therefore we find therein (as I have shewn) that where both the Parents are Unbelievers, there the Children are unclean; what has any one to do to call them clean?

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But may some say, we supply that Defect by Godfathers and Godmothers. To which I answer, these being no Parents, can never convey a Parental Right, be they never so good. But commonly 'tis to be observ'd, that the standing Gossips in Parishes are the vaineſt Persons, and such as can convey no Right to that Ordinance to their own Children, much leſs can they convey a Right to others. But ſuppoſe them to be holy, yet who call'd them to that Work? Is this of God or from Men? That which has no Divine Command for it, will ſcarce have a Divine Bleſſing attend it. I wonder how any dare to engage for another, that he ſhall forſake the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil. What is this, but to mock God, to promiſe that for others, which they cannot perform for themſelves; and more ſtrange, that ſuch as pretend to be Guides, ſhould ſuffer this. As for the

Gossips, poor ignorant Souls, they know not what
 Ma. 3. 12. they do; but for ſuch as lead 'em, thus to cauſe them to err, is dreadful. Sure thoſe Sureties have either low Thoughts of what they promiſe, or high Thoughts of their own Abilities to perform, or both. This threefold Promiſe they think perform'd, when the Children come to learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commandments.

From whence it appears what Thoughts they had of what they ſolemnly promiſed. What, is this to forſake the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil! O eaſy Way to Heaven! But perhaps you'll ſay, that is not all, for they are moreover to bring them to be Biſhopt, as they call it, or confirm'd, which is the Second Part to the ſame Tune. The Papiſts have reckon'd Confirmation among their Seven Sacraments; but where do we read of ſuch a diſtinct Ordinance in the New Teſtament? I well know that we read of *confirming the Souls of the Diſciples*, Acts 14. 22. and of *confirming the Churches*, Acts 15. 41. but that this was done by a ſhort Form of Words in the nature of a Charm, I am yet to learn. It ſeems evident, this was done by preaching the Goſpel. But ſuppoſe, tho' by no means to grant, that the Apoſtles did this as a diſtinct Ordinance, yet how miſerably do theſe miſs the Mark, as to the Subject. For while they only confirmed Diſciples, and Church-Members, and who, no doubt, did walk ſuitably thereunto; theſe uſually confirm the very worſt in the Parishes. Many I have known confirm'd thus indeed, but it has been in Sin and Wickedneſs. I'll conclude this Head with the Words of Huſſe, as quoted by Dr. Willet in his *Syn. Pap.* p. 818. *Brevi & levis Confirmatio Episcoporum cum Ritibus ſolemnizata, eſt à Diabolo introducta*: That light and brief Confirmation of Biſhops, with its Rights, as it is ſolemnized, is introduc'd by the Devil. But ſome may ſay, he means Romiſh Biſhops: Suppoſe it ſo, yet how the ſame Thing can be of God among Proteſtants, which is of the Devil among Papiſts, I confeſs I am at a loſs to know.

2d. Seal is the Lord's Supper. Christ will have this Ordinance kept up in his Churches till he comes; and as he will have this Ordinance perpetuated, so he hath given us Rules to know to whom it is to be administered; and hath told us, *Mat. 15. 26. 'Tis not meet to take the Childrens Bread, and cast it to Dogs.* Yea, and expressly commands, *Mat. 7. 6. Give not that which is holy unto the Dogs.* And the Apostle backs this, and tells us, *1 Cor. 10. 21. Ye cannot drink the Cup of the Lord, and the Cup of Devils: Ye cannot be Partakers of the Lord's Table, and of the Table of Devils.* But, if after all, a Church will be so wicked as to receive all Comers, yea, to compel all from 16 to 60 to come to that Ordinance, none can justly blame such as are Saints indeed, for departing from such a Church. 'Tis doubtless the Duty and Property of a Gospel Church, to do all she can to promote the Honour of Christ, but what greater Affront and Indignity can be offered to Christ, than to admit common Drunkards, Swearers, &c. to be meet Guests with him. This is much worse than crucifying Christ between two Thieves, for they did not believe Christ to be the promised Messiah; but these seem to have such an high Esteem for him, that no sooner they hear the Sound of his Name, but in conjunction with those subterraneous Spirits, they bow the Knee; and yet after all, admit of many such to be Guests with him at his Table, whose Sins are of no less Dye than those Thieves that hung upon the Cross. And what is this, but to murder Souls, to suffer such to come to that Ordinance, as have no discerning of the Lord's Body, and so eat and drink Damnation to themselves. This is to make the House of God a Den of Robbers. Thus the Table of the Lord is made contemptible and polluted, *Mal. 1. 12.*

But some may say, the Apostle exhorts to examine our selves, and so to eat, &c. We exhort to this, and if Persons are satisfied as to their own Fitness, what have we to do to exclude them? To this I answer, That Self-Examination is necessary, I grant; but that this is all that is necessary, I boldly deny. Examination is a difficult Work, and calls for more Light than the Generality of Men have. You may as well set a blind Man to judge of Colours, as to set an ignorant carnal Man to judge of his State. Solomon tells us, *Prov. 16. 2. All the Ways of a Man are clean in his own Eyes.* So, *Prov. 16. 25. There is a Way that seemeth right unto a Man, but the End thereof are the Ways of Death.* Thus you see how apt Men are to mistake, and to make themselves rich when they have nothing.

Under the Law, if there was a Suspicion of the Leprosie, the Priest was to look on him, and to determine the Matter, as in *Lev. 13.* at large. If the Priest pronounced him unclean, he was to be excluded the Camp; if he pronounced him clean, he

was

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was to continue in the Camp, among his Brethren. And look, as the Loper was not to judge of his own Cleanness, but the Priest; so under the Gospel, Souls are not to be sole Judges of themselves, in order to a Communion with a Church. Let a Man think himself never so clean, yet if the Minister and Church see his Plague-spots, they ought to pronounce him unclean, and shut him out of their Camp, and not be impos'd upon, lest others are infected by him. The Admission of such scandalous Members tends not only to the Ruin of such Members, but to the Ruin of the whole Community.

Amos 3. 3. How can two walk together except they be agreed? Taking in wicked Members is the way to drive out them that are good; and then what will the End of such a Church be?

But some may further plead, that tho' Persons have been drunk two or three Times in a Week, yet they in Charity hope that on *Saturday* at Night they may have repented. To this I answer, This wild Charity has undone Thousands. We are not to go upon meer Possibilities, what may be, but as near as can be, upon Certainities, what is. If I see a Person live in Sin, and

see no Signs of Sorrow, I am to judge him a Sinner. *Mat. 7. 16. The Tree is known by its Fruits. Men don't gather Figs of Thistles.* I would fain know what ground there is in Scripture for such Charity. To be charitable is to do good, but this is to do Mischief, therefore no Charity. It would be a thousand Times more like true Charity to undeceive such Souls, and instead of giving them the Sacrament, to give a sound Reproof for presuming to crowd in among the Guests in their filthy Garments.

Now it can never be Schism to depart from a Church, if such intolerable Disorders as these are conniv'd at. If such as call themselves a Church, have no Power to keep out scandalous Members, because they think themselves fit, I can't see how any Room is left in such a Church for any Censures in that Church. For if the Person was to be sole Judge of his Fitness as to his coming in, why not also as to his continuing in? And so the Church has no Power left to bind, contrary to *Mat. 18. 18. Whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven.*

3d Note of a true Church is regular Discipline; where there is no Rod, and yet many Children in a Hoyle, there is like to be an unruly Family. So where a Church is numerous, and no Rod of Discipline, what can such a Church come to? Nor must it be a Rod of our own making, but such as God hath appointed. For as God will have Discipline in his Church, so he hath told us what it must be. For as the Law of the Land doth not only require that some Punishment is inflict'd for such and such Crimes, but appoints the kind of Punishment for such Faults; so in the Gospel, we have Directions what Faults are punishable in

in a Church; and we are also as clearly inform'd what Punishment to use, and in what way to use it; and to punish any in a way contrary to the Rules Christ hath given us, is as provoking to God, as not to punish at all. I don't remember that ever we read of any Offender that ever stood in a white Sheet, in the Apostle's Day; or was laid under any pecuniary Fines. I don't read that ever Drunkenness and Debauchery were conniv'd at, or any cast to the Devil for teaching a Charity-School. Yea, when Censures have been inflicted, yet before that, all due Means have been used to prevent it, and timely Warning given; they never ran upon Men as Lions, but always shew'd Compassion to their Souls.

The Weapons they used were not carnal but spiritual; nor do we read of any one restor'd upon the Payment of any Sum of Money, but always those Censures which were inflicted for Sin, were removed upon true Repentance for it. Thus I have nam'd these three Marks or Notes of a true Gospel-Church, which are so generally consented to by our Protestant Divines: And where these are wanting, it can be no Schism to depart from such a Church, to join to a better.

III *General Head* is, to shew what it is that doth constitute us Members of a particular Church, so as that our not holding Communion with such a Church, may render us guilty of Schism; and this seems highly necessary to be known, to prevent Mistakes; for as a Church may think her self sound and pure, when she is not, as *Rev. 3. 19.* so a Church may think such to be Members as are not. Separation from a Church doth presuppose Conjunction: Such therefore as never were join'd to a Church, according to the Order of the Gospel, can't be guilty of Schism, in not holding Communion with that Church, be it never so pure. For as she that never was married can't transgress the Rules of Wedlock; no more can they sin by not submitting to the Rules of a Church, who never were Members of that Church. And as we must go to the New Testament for Light, concerning the Order of a Gospel Church, and not to the *Jewish Law*, from which Yoke we are now free, *Gal. 5. 1.* so by the same Rule, we must judge how we become Members of such a Church. For I don't think it left to the Liberty of any, to gather Churches as they please, or to make Laws in Christ's Church. When the Tabernacle was rais'd, they were to observe to do every thing according to the Commands, even to a Pin, or the Taches, *Exod. 26.* With no less Exactness are we to observe the Order Christ has given us in his Gospel, in his Churches. Certain it is, beyond all Contradiction, there are some Churches in the World, which we may not hold Communion with, and yet not be guilty of Schism; tho' in the mean while we believe them to be Churches of Christ. I may believe the Church in *Geneva*

to be a true Church, yet don't therefore think I am bound to hold Communion with that Church, much less do I think myself a Schismatick because I do not. But to come nearer home, and to the Point, I own many particular Dissenting Churches in *England* to be true Churches, and the best of Churches, yet I don't think myself guilty of Schism, tho' I never held Communion with some of them ; because, though I approve of 'em, yet I am not a Member of them. I shall therefore shew, 1. Negatively, what doth not make us to be Members of a Church, so as that our Non-communion with it is Schism. 2. Positively, what doth.

1. *Neg.* 'Tis not our being born, or our living in a Nation where such a Church is, be it never so pure, that doth make us Members of that Church ; for tho' the Church may be a true Church, yet some may not be qualified, according to Gospel-Rules, to be Members of it : but suppose they were, yet a bare Qualification doth not make one a Member, no more than a Man's being qualified for a Member of Parliament doth make him a Member thereof. How far this might be a Rule under the *Jewish* Dispensation, I shall not now enquire, as not material at all to the Point in hand ; for we have a Rule for this under the New Testament Dispensation, to which we shall do well to take heed. For tho' I honour *Moses* as a Servant, I honour Christ more as his Lord, *Heb.* 3. 3. when 'tis said, *Acts* 2. 41. *And the same Day there were added unto them about 3000 Souls*, we can scarce understand it of so many born. In short, these [*Born-Members*] seldom prove good. Nor doth our living in such a Nation make us Members. Saith the Apostle, *1 Cor.* 11. 20. *When ye come together therefore into one Place*, was this the whole Nation do you think ? Can we suppose, without offering Violence to Reason, that the Church in *Philemon's* House was the whole Nation ? If every Church was National, I wonder how there came to be seven in *Asia*, *Rev.* 1. 4. If all that live in a Nation must be Members, Lord, what a Church must that be ! Then the Question need not be ask'd, what are you ? have you Grace ? &c. but where was you born ? or rather, where do you live ? The very Naming such a Church as this is enough to drive away all sober Christians to seek for a better Pasture, lest they should pine away by staying in a *Common over-stock'd*. I wish the Pope is not brought in at last as the Head of so vast a Church. We read of Churches in such and such Towns, as *Ephesus*, *Smyrna*, &c. and more than once of a Church in a House ; but where do we read of such a thing as a National Church in the New Testament ? if all that live in a Nation must be Members of a Church, then such as are excommunicated must be driven beyond Sea.

2. 'Tis not our being Baptized by a Church, that doth so make us Members of that Church; that our not holding Communion with that Church afterward, must absolutely render us guilty of Schism. It may admit of a Debate, whether ever any were made Church-Members by Baptism? To me it seems clear, that 'tis by Virtue of Church-Membership that the Person has a Right to Baptism *in foro hominum*, and not Baptism that makes any to be Members. But I will not insist on this Head; but will suppose that all that are baptized, do *ipso facto*, become Members of that Church; yet 'tis possible, in some Cases; that a departing from such a Church may not be Schism. For instance, should a Parent baptize his Child into the *Romish* Faith, and after that the Child sees their Errors; would it be Schism to depart from that Church? Surely not; especially in the Judgment of Protestants. And they that affirm this, do unavoidably charge our Reformers with Schism, in separating from *Rome*; and if the very Foundation of a Church was laid in Schism, 'tis no wonder to see a daily departing from that Church. I cannot but think, that they that make such an Outcry against us as Schismatics, in departing from them, because some of us, without our Knowledge and Consent, were baptized by them, do it to affright us all by degrees back again to the Church of *Rome*; for if our Non-communication with them, merely upon the Account of Baptism, renders us guilty of Schism, it seems to me impossible, how they that have done the same should be innocent.

2. *Positively*, That which now makes us Members of a Gospel Church, is a voluntary and free Resignation of our selves, under God, to the Care of such a Church, in order to our Partaking of all Ordinances with them. Whether this must be done by Writing, or by speaking our Minds, and whether this Declaration must be made to the Minister, or before the whole Church, I shall not now determine; but shew it must be a voluntary Act in the Person joining. When *Paul* was converted, 'tis said, *Acts* 19. 26. He assayed to [join himself] to the Disciples. So *Acts* 5. 13. Of the rest durst no Man [join himself] to them; to shew the former had. So *2 Cor.* 8. 5. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first [gave their own selves] to the Lord, and unto us, by the Will of God. 'Tis said, they first gave themselves to the Lord, *i. e.* by Faith, as being necessary, in order to their being joined to the Church. Communion with God is necessary, in order to Communion with a Church of God: Then they gave themselves to the Church, to shew how that Act of giving themselves to the Church, was as voluntary as their giving themselves to the Lord; and 'tis added, this they did by the Will of God, as referring to both, to shew that both were pleasing to God.

But observe carefully, that tho' a Person can't be a Member of a Church without this voluntary Act, so as to be admitted into full Communion with that Church, and so consequently cannot be guilty of Schism, in not holding Communion with it; yet it is possible that such as have thus voluntarily joined themselves, and after depart from it, may not be guilty of Schism. Should a Person who has thus joined himself with the Church of Rome, in his Ignorance and Blindness, after come to be enlightened into their Errors, and depart from them, did Protestants ever count this Schism? No surely.

But to make this more clear to you, it being that which doth immediately concern some Dissenters; consider *Paul*, whom I think we may safely follow, was born in the Bosom of the Jewish Church, and not only so, but did after consent to it, and a great while he continued in it, was a Zealot for it, and made great Progress in it. Says he, *Acts 22. 3. I am verily a Man which am a Jew — and taught according to the perfect manner of the Law of the Fathers; and was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day. So Gal 1. 13, 14, &c. For ye have heard of my Conversation in Time past, in the Jews Religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it, and profited in the Jews Religion above many my Equals in mine own Nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the Traditions of my Fathers. So again, Phil. 3. 5. Circumcised the eighth Day, of the Stock of Israel, of the Tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the Law a Pharisee: Yet when God converted him, he soon quits that Way, and joins to them that he had persecuted, and Gal. 1. 23. preached the very Faith he had destroyed; and tells us, v. 7. But what Things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Thus you see how that 'tis not a Person's being born in the Bosom of the Church, nor his after-Consent to it, that doth always oblige him not to depart from it.*

IV. *General* shall be to shew what Schism is. I have shewn you the Word signifies Dissention or Division. So that I define it thus: 'Tis a causeless Separation from a Church; or a sinful causing of Contention, or Divisions in a Church, where we remain. I shall speak distinctly to the Parts of it, which are Two.

1. A causeless Departing from a Church. There are several good Causes why we may depart from a Church. Suppose a Person removes from one County to another, or from one Nation to another, by some special Providence; in such a case, none can deny but he may depart from the Church where he was, and join with a sound Church where he goes. Or, suppose there are such Irregularities in the Church where he is, as he cannot bear, then in Conscience he may and ought to depart; especially if he finds he has no Power to rectify them by staying in; in this case,

case, the Sin lies at their Door who gave the Offence, and not at his that took it. If a Church will lay such stumbling Blocks in the way as cannot be leapt over; Ezek. 14. 3, 4. 'tis more their Fault that laid them, than his who Rom. 14. 13. turns aside to avoid them. Before we can justly accuse any of Schism, in departing from us, we must be careful to prove, that we have not departed from God's Word; by adding to, or taking from, the Rules left us therein, in point of Worship; for I look upon that to be the most dangerous Schism, to depart from God's Word. For the best of Churches now on Earth may err, but the Scripture is an infallible Rule, as to Faith and Manners. If, therefore, any will add to this Rule, and then make those Additions Terms of Communion, let them see to it. A true Church of Christ will own Christ in all his Offices, as a Prophet to make Laws, and not only as a King, to rule by Laws made to his Hand.

I have often heard it confess'd by those from whom we dissent, that the Causes of our Separation from them are only Ceremonies, and Things indifferent. 'Tis well they are so to them; for I do sincerely affirm, if one may speak for all, they are not so to us. We can't think any Part of Instituted Worship indifferent, when we read that awful Text, Rev. 22. 18, 19. *For I testify unto every Man that beareth the Words of the Prophecy of this Book, if any Man shall add unto these Things, God shall add unto him the Plagues that are written in this Book: And if any Man shall take away from the Words of the Book of this Prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy City, and from the Things which are written in this Book.* O dreadful Sentence! Could we but perswade our selves those Things are indifferent which they own to be so, they would readily see our Compliance with them, tho' they will not comply with us to part with them. For I judge Separation from Churches to be a Thing of too ill consequences, to be encouraged for nothing, or for Things indifferent. What, shall we cause Heats and Animosities among Neighbours? Shall we weaken the Interest of the Nation, and thereby indanger our Lives, and all that is dear to us? Shall we be such Fools as to run but the Hazard of Persecution when we may sleep in a whole Skin, and all these for Ceremonies, or Things indifferent? Interest would teach us to be wiser than thus; had we but a Grain of common Sense; and not to debar our selves of Things advantageous, for the sake of Things indifferent. Is it not far more desirable to be fixt in a Living as good as free Land, than to live such a precarious Life as we do; and to be under such mean Circumstances as many of us are? And have we not Reason to believe, from them that are gone before, that if others could do as they have done, our Sin of Schism is not too great to be forgiven. It is not therefore for
Con-

30 *Dissenters no Schismatics ;*

Contention-sake, but for Conscience-sake towards
 1 Pet. 2. 19. God, that we dissent? And since it can be no other, sure we deserve to be more tenderly dealt with, than branded as Schismatics.

Suppose we were in a Mistake, a tender Christian Behaviour would be the most proper way to convince us. Conscience is a tender Thing, and can't be compell'd: Hence saith the Apostle, *Rom. 84. 5. Let every Man be fully perswaded in his own Breast.* Mean while we wrong no Man. We endeavour to render to *Cæsar* the Things which are *Cæsar's*, and unto God the Things which are God's. We pay *Tribute to whom Tribute is due ; Custom to whom Custom is due.* We pay Tythes and Rates for the Support of that Church that many of us never come at; and *that not from Constraint, but of a willing Mind.* We pray always and earnestly for the Queen now upon the Throne, and are ready, if occasion requir'd it; and the Wall of Partition was but remov'd, to throw aside our Bibles, or rather to take them with us, and to venture our Lives, and all that is dear to us, in Defence of her Royal Person, and the Laws; and are unwilling to believe, that ever she intends to take up the Sword, or a shorter Weapon against us, who are so willing to venture our All for her. But to return from this Digression.

But now, as for such as own these Things to be Indifferent, (and indeed all the World must own they are indifferent on their side) and so consequently can part with them without Sin, yet will not, how will they answer it to God one Day? Can we think those Men do really think Schism such a damnable Sin as they tell us it is, when to prevent it, they will not part with what they call things indifferent? unless they desire our Damnation. What! doth it seem a Thing less than indifferent, whether so great a Part of the Nation be sav'd or damn'd? We can't but take such Treatment unkindly, as we are Neighbours, as we are Natives, as we are Subjects to the same Prince, and worship the same God, to have such hard Things put upon us, as for the sake of Things indifferent, to be both excluded from many Privileges, and to be branded as Schismatics too. Foreigners, whether Papists or Heathens, have kinder Treatment than we. We are the only home-born Slaves. Mean time, it goes near our Hearts, to think how ready we are to leap into the Flames to save one of their Bodies, tho' we can't come up to their Modes of Worship; and to think, they will not part with Things indifferent to save so many of our Souls. If we don't return we are all damn'd, if some of them say true; and damn'd we may be, for all them; for if taking up a Straw would prevent our going to Hell, we should go. I fear I may say of some, they would part with greater Things to damn us than they will to save us.

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2. Schism may be made by a sinful causing of Strife and Divisions in a Church, where we continue Members. All Strife or Division is not Schism. Should a Member of a Church see Disorders in the Church, and should think it more his Duty to stay a Member, in Hopes to rectify such Disorders, than to depart from the Church; tho' his continuing in might prove a Means of Contention or Division, yet it might not be Sin on his side. But I have hinted something on this before. In a word, if you see one that loves to sow the Seeds of Discord in Churches, by disaffecting Members to the Minister, or his Doctrine, without a Cause, or weakening the Affections of Members one to another, note that Man as a Schismatick indeed.

But for any peaceably to leave a Church, in some measure corrupt, to join with one more pure; to leave one that has a Mixture of Human Inventions, with Divine Institutions, to join with one that doth all Things according to Divine Appointment; hath not so much as the least Shadow of Schism in it. I would fain know what we have in our stated Worship that is not clearly warranted by the Word of God? Nay, what have we, that they have not, from whom we dissent, who yet charge us with Schism? Have we publick Singing? so have they. Have we Preaching? so have they, tho' not so much. Have we Baptism with Water, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? so have they. Have we the Lord's Supper administred in both kinds? so have they. And as to Church-Officers, have they Bishops? so have we [*good store.*] Have we Deacons? so have they, and Arch ones too some of them.

As for Arch-Bishops and Lord-Bishops, we have none; yet we highly honour these as *Cesar's* Creatures. And indeed it is well for us we have none of these, since we have no Benefices sufficient to support their Pomp and Grandeur; for while these ride in their Coach and Six, our Bishops are often forced to go on foot.

Nor have we less to say in defence of our Discipline. As for too many of our Hearers, we are grieved to see their disorderly Conversations; we do all we can to reclaim these, by publick and private Exhortations; we suit our Doctrine as near as we can to them, and deal faithfully with their Souls; but 'tis not in our Power to change their Hearts. We can't drive these out of our Congregations, from Hearing, nor would we if we could. The more wicked any of these are, the more need to hear, it being the ordinary Means appointed of God to convert Souls. and that which through Grace we see daily blessed to that end. But we widely distinguish between Hearers and Members. And we say, as 1 Cor. 5. 12, 13. *For what have I to do to judge them also that are without, do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth.*

But

But for Members that have joined themselves to us, we take other Measures as to them. We admonish such as walk disorderly, and excommunicate such as contemn our Admonition. We don't take in any Members without good Satisfaction. We do the best we can to rectify Disorders, and not to suffer Sin to lie upon each others Souls; and had we the Civil Power to back our Church-Censures, we should not doubt, by the Blessing of God, but to keep our Churches much purer than now they are. We are not without our Failings, but don't think it our Duty to cut off a Member till all Gospel-Means are used to render it useful again. Cutting off Members is an unpleasant Work to us. Yet I am persuaded, that the Dissenting Churches, however they may differ in other Things, do all mutually agree in this, to keep off scandalous Offenders from the Table of the Lord.

We can't but with Lamentation speak it, we have had some great Blots on some that have ministered in holy Things; notwithstanding Churches Care in chusing, and the Care of Ministers in ordaining, yet now and then a Goat has slipped by in Sheep's Cloathing; yet where such Things have happen'd, our Churches have assum'd a Power to put them out at the same Door they

came in. We read of a *Judas* among the twelve, John 6. 70. to shew us how the best of Churches may mistake, but as we don't read of his continuing with them, after he betray'd his Lord, but they soon chose another to fill up his Place, of greater Integrity: So let any, if they can, shew one scandalous Minister that is continued among us. I do not mention these Things to lay open the Failings of any Ministers, but to justify those Churches that have by this Means born their Testimony against those whose Sins cannot be hid. And can such as belong to our Churches be guilty of Schism!

But here I will suppose some to object thus: After all you have said for your selves, we don't think your Dissenting Churches to be true Churches, or at least to be compar'd with that from which you dissent; as wanting, 1. Their *Antiquity*. 2. *Authority*. 3. *Unity*. 4. *Verity*. 5. *Uniformity*. 6. *Charity*. 7. *The very Place of Worship* is made an Argument against us, for want of a better. To each of which I shall fully answer, and so wipe off the Reprach cast upon us, and desire the Reader to weigh what is spoken without Prejudice.

And first, as to the supposed Objection of the Want of *Antiquity*: To this I answer in three Things as follows.

1. *Antiquity* is no Note of a True Church, nor the want of it a Note of one that is not. The oldest Churches are not always the best. Tho' the Old Testament Dispensation was before the New, yet the Apostle makes this to be preferable to that, Heb. 8. 1. 40. *God having provided some better Things for us. So Heb. 7. 22. By so much was Jesus made a Surety of a better Testament.*

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The Fathers did not think Antiquity a certain Note of a true Church. Saith Greg. *Consuetudo sine veritate, est vetustas Erroris*: Antiquity without Verity, is the antientness of Error. It matters not what standing our Churches are of, if but agreeable to Truth.

A new Truth is better than an old Error. Suppose we had lived Ignorant of Gospel-Truths to this Day, must we do always so. We are not to walk in a Way because it is troden, but we are to enquire, is it the right Way? *Jer. 6. 16. Thus saith the LORD, stand ye in the Ways, and see, and ask for the old Paths, where is the good Way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your Souls.* Observe, it was to be a good Way, as well as an old Way. Solomon saith, *Prov. 16. 31. The hoary Head is a Crown of Glory, if it be found in the Way of Righteousness.* Yet we are told, *Isa. 65. 20. But the Sinner being an Hundred Years old shall be accursed.* Custom in an evil Way never made that Practice the better, but the worse. If a Criminal be tried for a Fault, and be found Guilty, yet if it is the first Fault, he often escapes; but if he is found an old Thief ten to one but he dies. Thus as to the Case in hand; a Church that has long erred from the Truth, is but little to be esteemed. So that before we can be perswaded to honour a Church for its Antiquity, we must see its Verity, lest we should honour the Devil more than Paul, since 'tis certain he is the elder.

2. If Antiquity is an infallible Note of a true Church, and the eldest is always the best, then I fear the Papists will prove themselves to be a purer Church than either. 'Tis well known to many, how they boast of Antiquity, as if none like 'em; and have challenged the Body of Protestants, to prove where their Church was before Luther's Day. To which the general Answer has been, that the true Church, till then, lay in the Bosom of one that was Corrupt. And yet notwithstanding, the Protestants not only think themselves a Church, but a purer Church than that from which they are departed; and if so, who can tell but we that come last, suppose it so, may be the best of all the Three. But,

3. Our dissenting Churches are of a longer standing than many are aware of; and I have reason to believe, if a narrow Scrutiny be made, of an earlier date than some that we dissent from; for while some can look back no further than Luther's Day, we can prove ours to be truly Apostolical, and as ancient as Paul himself, there being no part of our Worship, but what is clearly proved from the New Testament. And further, we need not look back for Directions in our Worship, and Order of our Churches. To prove Singing, see *Eph. 5. 19. Speaking to your selves, in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs; Singing, and making Melody in your Heart to the Lord.* For our praying, *Acts 6. 4. But*

we will give our selves continually to Prayer. Yea, for our praying without Forms and Books; *Rom. 8. 26. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought.* Which Text clearly proves, That to pray as we ought, is to trust to the Assistance of the Spirit of God for the Matter of Prayer. But how they can do this that have every Word of their Prayer written before 'em, I confess I do not understand. Such who are thus furnished beforehand, leave no Room for the Spirit to help them as to [what] they should pray for.

Objection. But some may say, by the Spirit, there we are to understand the Spirit of Man, and not the Spirit of God. Answer, Such a Sense carries in it this gross Absurdity, That the Spirit of Man is a distinct Thing from Man: If that Spirit was the Spirit of Man, it must be comprehended under that Word [we]. Doubtless he means such a praying there as he doth, *Jude 20. Praying in the Holy Ghost, ἐν ἁγίῳ πνεύματι, in the Holy Spirit, or by the Holy Spirit, as the Preposition ἐν oft signifies.* Here I hope none will say, that by the Holy Ghost we are to understand the Spirit of a Man.

For Preaching, and that in Houses too, *Acts 5. 42. And daily in the Temple, and in every House, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.* Observe, tho' they had Liberty to preach in the Temple, which I take to have been as convenient and as Holy (to say no more) as any of our high Places are, yet they did not refuse, even then, to preach in Houses.

Again, *Luke 4. 18. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath appointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor.* *Ver. 20. And he closed the Book, &c.* he did not read all his Sermon as some do. For our Baptizing, see *Mat. 28. 19. Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* For the Lord's Supper, see *1 Cor. 11. 24. This do in remembrance of Me.* For the Blessing at the end, see the close of almost all *Paul's Epistles.*

No less have we to say, as to our Church Officers; for Deacons, see *Acts 6. 3, 4, 5, 6.* Observe, they had not so much as a Deacon, but what was of their own chusing. For our Ordination by Presbyters, see *1 Tim. 4. 14. Neglect not the Gift that is in thee, which was given thee by Prophecy, with the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery.* And that our Ministers are Bishops, is fully proved from *Acts 20. 17, &c.* Observe, when *Paul* came to *Ephesus*, He called for the Elders of the Church. Were these Lord Bishops think you? If so, there were several in one Town. 'Tis beyond all rational Contradiction, these were preaching Elders, or ordinary Ministers, and says he to those Elders, *v. 28. Take heed therefore unto your selves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers, ὡς ἐπεὶ ἐπέμενεν ὑμᾶς, hath made Bishops.* I wonder why that was

rendered Overseers? Nay, come we to the very Garment many of us wear, see for that, *2 Tim. 4. 13. The Cloke that I left at Troas, with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee.* Mind, not a Gown, nor a Surplice, but a Cloke. And I cannot but think, that if *Timothy* was a Lord Bishop, as some imagine, *Paul* was too bold, to command him to be a Servant to bring his Cloke after him. Thus you see how every Thing in our Worship is clearly proved from the New Testament; and can it after all be Schism to belong to such Churches? Hear O Heavens! I am really afraid they will charge *Paul* next, with the same Sin, and make him more Guilty than we are, forasmuch as we had never done as we do, had not he led us the way; and if they should, I can't see but one Argument by which he can be cleared; and that is, that the Churches which he gathered were long before theirs, and therefore it was impossible to be guilty of Schism, in departing from a Church which he never saw, and knew so very little of.

And now I have made such clear Proof in Vindication of our way of Worship, from the New Testament, let me desire those from whom we dissent, to make as full Proof of theirs from the New Testament, yea, or from the Old; and if they cannot, let 'em blush and be ashamed. And first, where do we read of an Altar with Steps in all the New Testament? Nay, was not this even forbidden under the Old; *Ex. 20. 26. Neither shalt thou go up by Steps unto mine Altar.* Again, where do you read in the New Testament of any that worshipped towards the East? Nay, was it not one of the greatest Abominations under the Old? *Ezek. 8. 15, 16. Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater Abominations that they do. And he brought me into the inner Court of the Lord's House, and behold at the Door of the Temple of the Lord, between the Porch and the Altar, were about Five and Twenty Men, with their Backs towards the Temple of the Lord, and their Faces towards the East; and they worshipped the Sun towards the East.* And adds, *v. 18. Therefore will I also deal in Fury, mine Eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine Ears with a loud Voice, yet will I not hear them.* Again, where do we read in the New Testament of any printed Prayer Books? Again, where do we read in all the Book of God, of the Cross in Baptism, or of Godfathers or Godmothers? Let 'em declare, if they are able.

Come we also to Church Officers, and here let me be so bold as to ask, where do we read in the New Testament of a Lord Bishop, or an Arch-Bishop, or an Arch-Deacon? Nay, where do we read of any of these under the Old Testament? Again, where do we read from the first Verse in *Genesis*, to the last of the *Revelation*, of a Vice-Chancellor, or Chancellors, or a Surrogate? There is nothing but deep silence touching all these.

Had I no more Proof for what we do, than those have, I profess I should soon desert the Cause; for I judge it dangerous to build such a weighty Thing as a Church, upon any other Foundation but what Christ and his Apostles have laid, lest like that Building upon the Sand it fall, and great be the Fall of it. Nor is it enough that we build upon a good Foundation, but all the Structure ought to be agreeable: Wood, Hay, and Stubble, and such combustible Matter, ought not to be laid upon a sure Foundation. Such Builders must suffer loss, tho' they may be saved *so as by Fire*, 1 Cor. 3. 15.

To the Second Part of the supposed Objection, of our want of Authority, that we are not Establish'd by Law, nor have we any Spiritual Courts, as they have: To these I Answer,

If the Law is not so much in Favour of us, as it is of them, yet 'tis as much, and somewhat more in Favour of us, than their Law was of Christ, *John 19. 7. We have a Law, and by that Law he ought to die; because he made himself the Son of God.* Now, was Christ a Schismatick? I hope not. Was it not more the fault of the Law, for condemning him for owning so great a Truth; than his, for owning of it? 'Tis well known, how most of the Apostles suffered Martyrdom, and no doubt, but pursuant to some Law. Were the Martyrs in Queen Mary's Days Schismatics? We are Established by the Laws of Christ, as hath been abundantly proved; and he being the great Prophet of the Church, we think this is more our Honour than to be Established by human Laws. If we have but the Law of Christ for us, we don't much consult other Laws, nor think our selves bound to obey them when contrary to his. *Acts 5. 29. We ought to obey God rather than Man.* We read of some who not only wanted Laws to establish them, but had Laws made to subvert them, and yet acted contrary to those Laws, and were blameless; yea, highly commended, and greatly blest, and honoured of God. See *Exod. 1. 16, 17, 20. If it be a Son, then ye shall kill him.—But the Midwives feared God, and did not as the King of Egypt commanded them, but saved the Men Children alive.* And 'tis said, *v. 20, 21. Therefore God dealt well with the Midwives. And it came to pass, because the Midwives feared God, that he made them Houses, i. e. gave 'em Children and Families;* thus God blessed them. Thus we read, *Dan. 3. 10, 15.* how the Three Children refused to obey the Decree of the King, and how God miraculously preserved them, *v. 27.* But blessed be God, this is not our Case, we have been assured again and again of Royal Protection from the Throne, in our Way of Worship.

And as to our want of Spiritual Courts, falsely so called, all we can say, is this, we have Power to bind and loose, and make a right Use of it too; and I don't know what any have more. Saith Christ, *Mat. 15. 18. Whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.* And I am confident this is more than Christ hath promised to some, and more than he will do to those from whom we dissent. I confess we have no Power to ruin Mens Estates by pecuniary Fines, nor do we desire it. Should any come to us to buy off a Censure, we should all by one Consent say as he to that Sorcerer, *Acts 8. 20, 21, 22, 23. Thy Money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the Gift of God may be purchased with Money: Thy Heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy Wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the Thoughts of thy Heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive thou art in the Gall of Bitterness, and in the Bond of Iniquity.* As we never inflict a Censure but for Sin, so we never remove it, but upon Appearance of true Repentance, and do abominate that Popish Practice of selling Pardons; and so plucking the Crown from Christ's Head, whose Prerogative only 'tis to forgive Sin.

Reader, that thou may'st see what excellent Use these Courts (called Spiritual Courts) are of, I'll tell thee a Story, that I certainly know to be true, and very lately too. A Gentleman whom I well know, was chosen Executor in Trust for a considerable Estate, the Testator being dead, and leaving some Hundred Pounds in Debts out of the County, the Executor proves the Will in the Prerogative Court above, and was there assured, that no Court in the Country could demand any Thing as due to them. Soon after, he is warn'd into their Court, to prove the Will; is advis'd again by an able Attorney, not to pay any thing, only to exhibit the Seals. He sends a Messenger to their Court, with the Seals, and writes 'em a respectful Letter; tells 'em he was ordered not to pay any Fees; and being but an Executor in Trust, and liable to pay himself, whatever he paid contrary to Law, dare not send any Money; but told 'em, if he was misinform'd, he would pay them what was due upon Notice given. The Messenger returns, and tells him, when they had seen the Seals, and read the Letter, they seem'd well satisfied, and never so much as named any Money due to them. Some Months after, the Apparator calls on him, and tells him, that the next Week he would be excommunicated for not paying the Fees; the Gentleman told him, they never were demanded, nor was there any Warning given; he reply'd, he could not say much as to that, but was sure the next Week he would have the Writ come out.

Now Reader, I would put this Question, didst thou ever read of such Tyranny and Cruelty inflicted in the *Spanish Inquisition*?

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I am sure thou hast not. Did the Blood-thirsty *Bonner* and *Gardiner* ever equal these Spiritual Men? I profess I never could read that they did. For tho' those have inflicted severe Punishments, yet not on such as were willing to comply with their unreasonable Impositions in Things even contrary to Law. Nay, what Pains have those Bishops taken to proselyte Persons, before they condemn'd them to the Flames. So that to fall into the Hands of those Spiritual Men, seems to me but one degree short of falling into the Hands of the D—l.

So that if this is the worst they can say of us, and our Churches, that we have not such a tyrannical Power lodged in us; whether this renders our Churches the worse, or the better, I leave it to the unprejudic'd Reader to judge. Sure I am, we read of no such Courts in the New Testament, unless peradventure, that where Christ was condemn'd. What may be at the Mother-Church at *Rome*, *France*, *Spain*, or *Portugal*, I cannot well tell: These Courts are enough to make Dissenters, if there were none before.

The Third Part of the supposed Objection, is, our want of Unity. Christ's beloved is but one. We have Divisions, and Sub-divisions, while those from whom we dissent are all of a Piece. They have no Contentions about Religious Matters, but believe as the Church believes; and what can be a greater Ornament than Unity in a Church?

To this I answer; I have a Book in my Study, entituled, *An End to Controversie*. The Thing being so very desirable, I applied my self to read it; but as much as I desired an End to Controversie, I chose rather to uphold it, than follow his Directions to obtain it; which was, to have the Pope the sole Judge of Controversie, and to rest in his Determinations. But to answer further, and by Way of Concession, I own that Unity in the Truth is a lovely sight. Nor can I wholly justify the Dissenters in their differing Sentiments, which perhaps may be their dark Side, but what then, must they be branded as Schismatics, because they are enquiring for the Truth? But to answer more particularly.

1. The best of Churches on Earth have had Divisions in them; even those that were planted by Christ himself, and his Apostles. The Church of *Corinth* was a Gospel-Church, yet sadly divided, *1 Cor. 11. 18.* *I hear that there be Divisions among you.* So *1 Cor. 1. 11, 12.* *For it hath been declared unto me of you my Brethren, by them which are of the House of Chloe, that there are Contentions among you.* Now this I say, that every one of you saith, *I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.* *So Acts 15. 39.* *And the Contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other:* Nor do we read that good *Paul* and *Barnabas* ever met to make up the Difference, that I remem-

remember. So 'tis said of those that attended on Christ's Doctrine, *Mark 9. 34. For by the Way they had disputed who should be the greatest.* I confess I am far from thinking these to be set as Examples, yet they shew the imperfect State of the Church below. The Church is compared to the Moon, *Cam. 6. 10. Who is she that looketh forth as the Morning, fair as the Moon, clear as the Sun.* Like the Sun with respect to our Justification, but like the Moon with respect to Sanctification, which when at the full, and in the clearest Night, hath some Spots; to say nothing of those frequent and dark Eclipses it is subject to. Those that are the Churches Guides see but darkly, as through a Glass, the Popes that pretend to be infallible, one Pope has burnt what another decreed. We must never expect to see a Church perfectly joined together, of the same Mind, and of the same Judgment in all Things, till we get into the Church Triumphant in Heaven. But,

2. Unity in Error is a greater Scandal to a Church, than Contentions for Truth. Where there are Contentions, 'tis a Sign there are some that love the Truth, and tho' both Parties can't be right unless there be a Mis-understanding of Words, yet frequently one part hath Truth on their Side: But to see a Church sunk into Errors, and to rest there, is sad. 'Tis said, *Psal. 2. 2. The Rulers take Counsel together, against the LORD, and against his Anointed.* They had better have been in as many Minds as we are. Thus 'tis said, *Luke 23. 12. The same Day Pilate and Herod were made Friends together, for before they were at Enmity between themselves:* here was an Agreement, but a wicked one, to destroy Christ. Some have such low Thoughts of Truth, that they don't think it worth contending for; and, as we say, some take all for Fish that come within the Net, so some take all for Truth that they hear preach'd. They think, if their Ministers, who are so learned, don't know what is Truth, who should? when, poor Souls, some of them know no more of Truth than *Nicodemus* of the New Birth. When Christ told him the Necessity of Regeneration, in order to Salvation, he cries out, *John 3. 9. How can these things be?* We set a higher Value on Truth than this, and dare not take all for Truth that some Men call Truth, nor believe every Word, *Prov. 14. 15. The Simple believeth every Word, but the prudent Man looketh well to his going.*

We think it better becomes us to be earnestly contending for the Faith, than to sit still, and *Jude 3.* see the Truth suffer Shipwrack, or scoffingly *1 Tim. 1. 19.* with *Pilate* to say, as, *John 18. 38. What is Truth?*

3. Those we dissent from have no Cause to upbraid us with our Divisions, nor to boast of their own Unity. He that hath given himself the Trouble to read the unprofitable Controversy between the Upper House and Lower House of Convocation, where

where to be sure there is no Dissenter to disquiet 'em, will see as sharp a Debate as ever was among us, accented with some Circumstances which are not to be found among us. For while we pretend no Superiority one over another, but stand all upon Level Ground, and so think we may take the more Freedom to have a friendly Debate; these own a very great Difference, as between [Upper] and [Lower] and yet can't agree. Nay, while we differ about Matters of Moment, being afraid of being mistaken, these differ about Trifles, as if Difference was that which they delighted in. I wonder those mitred Heads have not made those little Creatures know, that in the thing wherein they deal proudly they are above them.

The fourth Part of the supposed Objection is, that we want Verity, that there is not that Clearness of Truth in our Preaching that is among them. We are lookt upon as a Company of illiterate Fools, that know not what to preach,

Job 12. 2. while they think they are the Men; and Wisdom will die with 'em.

To this I answer; and here I must confess, a great Difference as to Doctrine. I was once a constant Hearer of them from whom I now dissent, for many Years; and now plainly see, that had I continued there even until now, I might have remain'd ignorant of the great Gospel Truths, that were necessary to the Salvation of my Soul. The chief Doctrine that I heard, was Passive Obedience, it being in King *Charles's* Reign; and ready they were to press us to be subject to the Duke of *York*, before he was King. O the Peals! the repeated Peals! which have rang in my Ears of Passive Obedience! How oft have I heard that famous Instance of *David's* cutting off *Saul's* Skirts, and how his Heart smote him for it, with vehement Reflections on such as have ventured higher! How oft have I been told what Power Kings had, not only in the State, but in the Church, yea, over all we had! At last came the desired Day, the Duke of *York* is King, and mild and gentle his short Government was; but the mischief on't was, those Passive-Obedience Men had forgot their Text, and instead of being a Precedent to us to suffer, they first kick'd up the Heel against him, and drove him to a Condition far more to be dreaded by one of Royal Blood than [Death.] By which they plainly shewed us, what they meant by Passive-Obedience; that is to say, that all that oppos'd their Interest, from the highest to the lowest, should submit to them, and suffer what they think good to inflict. I hope no crowned Head will ever trust those Passive-Obedience-Men more, for his sake. They are almost got to the same Text again; but who knows what they mean, or how to trust 'em, since they can't say more on that Subject than they have done, nor do less, or rather suffer less?

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Or if at any time they happen'd to turn over the Leaf, to a new Subject, it was usually to cry up their excellent Constitution, or to cry down all such as dare depart from them. Upon these lofty Topicks they spent most of their Time, he that came hungering for Christ might starve for all them. Some time at a great chance you might hear of Christ, but as it was seldom, so it was in such a general way, that the most secure Sinner might go as he came. They always took care (to give 'em their due) not to grieve their Hearers, or to disturb the Peace of their Mind. Never, that I remember, did I hear of the Work of the Spirit, unless to attribute it to the Creature, or else to ridicule it. Regeneration, Faith and Conversion, were scarce ever heard of; and upon the whole, I must confess, I could sooner join in their Common Prayer, than sit under such dark and lifeless Preaching, if I may call it Preaching.

As for our own Preaching, let Men hear and judge. This I have observ'd, none speak so much against us, as those that never heard us. Seldom have we had any gone from us to them, but many have come from them to us, blessing God that ever their Byes were opened: or if at any time, any have happen'd to go from us to them, it hath usually been for Advantage, or to have the more Freedom to sin; and never did I know any the better for going, but many the worse.

This I'll say as to our Preaching, many of us do all we can to exalt Christ, and to magnify the Riches of Free Grace, thro' the Righteousness of Christ. We preach up the Necessity of Regeneration, Faith and Repentance, and every other Duty in its place, and the Necessity of the Spirit's powerful and free Agency to do all these. We preach up Original Sin as Rom. 5. 12. the Spring of all the actual Sins committed in the World; and in short, we preach far more agreeably to the 39 Articles, as to the principal Doctrines contained therein, than they do from whom we dissent; and tho' we are called *Dissenters*, yet they more properly are the Men: We dissent from the Place, they from the Doctrine; and which are worst, judge ye.

But some may say, how is it likely you Ministers should preach, who have but little or no Learning? I may retaliate in the Words of the Apostle, Rom. 10. 15. *And how shall they preach except they be sent?* As to Learning, we are like others, some have more, and some less; but we have found by Experience, that the greatest Scholars are not always the best Preachers. The Knowledge of Christ is to me the most valuable Qualification, to make a Minister. We have a due Respect to Learning, and a competent Share among us, and that some have of late found to their everlasting Shame; but we don't idolize Learning so, as for its sake to overlook what is more valuable and necessary, ha-

ving often found, that Learning without Grace makes Men but Tools for the Devil. The Truth has never met with greater Opposition than from learned Men. I believe the World doth not produce greater Wickedness than is now to be found in the Universities ; and how such should preach Christ that never knew him, yea that are open Enemies against him, is a Question hard to be resolved.

But may they say, You have some unlearned Men, how should these preach ? To which I answer, As some who are great Scholars, are poor Preachers ; so those who have but little Learning, may be good Preachers. Preaching is certainly God's Gift, and he may give it to whom he will. Saith Christ, *Mat. 11. 25. I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes.* And adds, *Ver. 26. Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* And saith the Apostle, *1 Cor. 1. 21. For after that in the Wisdom of God, the World by Wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe ;* that is, by such Preaching as the Learned World counted Foolishness. And I think, that Preaching is to be most valued, which God most owns and blesses, let the Instrument be what he will. If any of our Ministers are wanting in Learning, that Defect is oft over and above made up in Eminency of Grace and Holiness ; and if one of those must be wanting, and they don't often meet together, we think we had better be wanting as to some measure of Learning, than in the Grace of God ; and had rather sit and hear a plain heart-affecting Discourse of a crucified Jesus, than a Lecture out of *Aristotle* or *Thomas Aquinas*. We value those Discourses most that come from the Heart, tho' they may not be garnished with such Eloquence as some may.

The fifth Part of the supposed Objection is this, that we want Uniformity in Worship ; we have no stinted Forms of Prayer, as they have, but take Liberty to express our Minds to God as we will.

To this I answer, and for full Satisfaction in this Matter do refer the Reader to that excellent Book lately put out by Mr. *Robinson*, against Mr. *Bennet*, who deserves the Publick Thanks of the whole Body of the Dissenters, for his good Service, in vindicating the Truth, at the Cost of such hard Study, and for abating the Pride of such a haughty Adversary, who before was always nibbling at one or other of the Dissenters, but I believe has enough of 'em now.

How far Forms of Prayer may be lawful, or expedient, to such as have no better Help, and that are private Persons, I shall not now determine, as not material to the Point in hand ; but for Ministers to be thus muzzled, who are to be Men of the greatest Grace and Abilities, seems to be unreasonable. I look upon Prayer in a spiritual manner to be more than most take it to be, and is not a Reading a Prayer, or a *Saying*, a Prayer, but a Praying

ing a Prayer, as *Elias* did, *Jam* 5. 17. Should a Beggar come to my Door, and pluck out a Book to read over his Condition, I should not only refuse to give him, but should conclude him a Hypocrite, or something worse, if possible. He that knows his Wants, will not want a Book of Remembrance: You need not give a starving Man a Book to remember he is hungry, nor a condemned Man a Book to put him in mind that he must die. But how is it likely, some may say, that any should express themselves to God in such suitable Words, as when the Prayer is studied, and wrote before him. To this I answer, God doth not so much regard the Language as the Heart. And further, whether such as have composed Forms of Prayer, have always wrote good Sense, let him that understands read and judge.

Obj. Did not Christ teach his Disciples a Form of Prayer? *Mat.* 6. 9. After this manner therefore pray ye; *Our Father, &c.*

Ans. Tho' I am far from thinking it unlawful for Believers to use that Prayer, yet I can see no Reason to think that Christ designed that as a stinted Form; not only because of the great Difference there is in that Prayer, as you may see by comparing *Mat.* 6. 9, &c. with *Luke* 11. 2, &c. but also because neither Christ nor his Disciples did at any time after that, use it as a Form, that we know of. We read frequently of Christ's praying after that, but never of his using that Prayer. Nor do we read of his Disciples using it, which doubtless they would have done, had they understood it as a Form; it seems evident, Christ only gave it as a general Rule, that all our Petitions should be reduced to some of those general Heads.

But if after all, this must needs go for a strict Form of Prayer; I wonder how such as believe this, dare make any other Forms? What an Affront do such put upon Christ, as if they knew better how to make Prayers than he did! Such do, as it were, say, Lord, thou hast left us a Form of Prayer, but we don't think it sufficient, and therefore we must add many more; and by the way, if they, notwithstanding this supposed Form, have taken Liberty, and daily do, as Occasion requires, to compose new Prayers, and such as we have not a Word of in Scripture in any Form; why may not we use the same Freedom? Their Prayers were at first composed by Men, and that's the worst they can say by ours. Bishops composed theirs, and our Bishops compose their own. So that till we can see it proved from Scripture, not only that the Lord's Prayer was designed as a Form, but that they have more Power given them to compose new Prayers than we have, we shall never be convinced that we are gone out of the right way; since the Apostle tells us, *1 Cor.* 12. 9. *The Manifestation of the Spirit is given to every Man to profit withal.*

But that which I dislike more than Forms of Prayer, is that Spirit of Bitterness which I find in many, not only against us, but even against all Praying by the special Assistance of the Spirit of God, as is to be seen in the Works of Dr. South, &c. Times have been when such Books would have been burnt by the Common Hangman. Those poor lame Cripples not only make use of Crutches themselves, but seem greatly enraged that the whole World is not as bad as they are. But since so much has been wrote on this Head, that never yet was answered, nor ever will be, I'll add no more, but only a Passage I knew to be true; and it seems in favour of such publick Ministers, that none may think them unable to pray without Forms, tho' they use them; for I love to give every Man his due.

A Dissenting Friend and Acquaintance of mine; in a Journey, fell in company with a Clergy-man, whom I also well knew. After a while they discoursed on Forms of publick Prayer, whether lawful and expedient. The Parson was zealous for 'em, the Dissenter as zealous against 'em. The Parson told him, it was not for want of Abilities to pray *ex tempore*, that they made use of Forms; but they preferred these Forms before such Praying. The Dissenter was so bold as to put a *Quare* upon his Abilities for such a Work, which put the Parson into such a Heat, that he challenged him to pray with him for *Twenty Shillings*; but the Dissenter, tho' a Man of quick Parts and good Learning, dare not answer the Challenge, and so the Parson went away triumphing. From which courageous Act you may see what some Men can do if they would; and what Pity is it that such Men should not have free Liberty to exercise their Gifts, who dare venture so much Money upon them.

Sixthly, It may be objected, we want Charity, we are a Company of censorious People, that are for judging Mens States. A Man can't be drunk, nor swear, but he is called to account; whereas others are for putting a more favourable Construction on such human Infirmities, and don't presently unchristian Men for such things as these. But to this I answer, We think we may judge of a Tree by its Fruits. We dare not profane the Lord's Supper, by giving it to every profligate Wretch upon a dying Bed; but this I hope we can say, we have as much Charity as the Word of God allows, and something more for them from whom we dissent, than they seem to have for us; for some of them sentence us all to Hell by Wholesale; others, O unmerciful Men! [leave us there] which sounds as if they themselves came from thence, while we hope well of many of them, and make a Difference between the Precious and the Vile.

Lastly, and that which I believe to many, is more than all the rest, they don't approve of the Place we preach in. What, Barns!

Barns ! To this I answer, Those that don't like our Places of Worship, let them help us to better. Mean time we value the Place for the Doctrine sake, and not the Doctrine for the Place sake; and had much rather hear the Truth, as it is in *Jesus*, in a Barn, if we can't get a more convenient Place, than to hear Errors in a stately Cathedral; and think it no Shame to preach in such Places, as not only the Apostles, but even Christ himself preached in before us. The Woman of *Samaria* did not care for hearing Christ himself, because she did not like the Place. Saith Christ to her, *John 4. 20. Ye worship ye know not what; We know what we worship.* Saith she, *v. 20. Our Fathers worshipped in this Mountain.* Saith Christ, *v. 21. Woman, believe me, the Hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this Mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father,* that is, with respect to Places; tho' *Jerusalem* was the Place where the Temple stood, which I take to have been as holy as any of their pretended consecrated Places, they themselves being Judges.

Thus the Apostles, *Acts 5. 42. And daily in the Temple, and in every House, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.* So *Acts 28. 29, 30. And Paul dwelt two whole Years in his own hired House, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all Confidence, no Man forbidding him.* Tho' they were Heathens, yet they did not forbid him to preach in his own House; and yet we never read that it was consecrated or licensed. Thus Christ preach'd out of a Ship, *Mat. 13. 2, 3. On a Mountain, Mat. 5. 1, 2.* But perhaps some will say, Had we been there we would have taught him better things, or who would might have heard him for all us.

But if yet they must be Schismatics that preach out of these high Places, how will even some of them be free from the same Sin? for 'tis well known, that at *Sturbridge-Fair*, near *Cambridge*, they preach two Sabbath Days in a Year, and twice a Day too, which is more than ordinary, in the plow'd Field, *sub dio*. Now I would ask, Is that consecrated Ground? and how far it doth extend? Is all that Field holy? if so, O happy Purchaser! He need not fear wanting a Crop, without Dunning, since its Consecration will do for all.

But if it is answer'd, such Places were chosen *pro re nata*, as Occasion required, so were our Meeting-houses; and I am persuaded, it will puzzle the wisest of them to prove their publick Places holier than ours. For who gave them a Power above all others to consecrate Places? The Pope tells us, if we will believe him, he has had this Power long before them; and why may not we as well as they? But if, beyond all Contradiction, no Places are holy like those, what pity it is the Company is no more suitable to the Place? A holy House, a holy Pulpit,

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Pulpit, a holy Desk for the Clark, and holy Seats, for I suppose they are all alike, and unholy Preachers, and profane Hearers, are incongruous. *Moses* was not suffer'd to keep on his dirty Shoes upon holy Ground, *Exod.* 3. 5. In a word, I shall never be out of liking with our Meeting-Houses, if but in good Repair, so long as that Text is in my Bible, *Mat.* 18. 20. *For where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.* I think it much better to be where Christ is, tho' the Place is not holy, than to be in a pretended holy Place, where Christ is a Stranger.

So that upon the whole, tho' I cannot deny, but that the publick way of Worship is the best in some Respects to live in, as it is most profitable to Preachers, and most agreeable to carnal Hearers, who don't love to have their Consciences disquieted, or to be at any more Charge for their Souls than needs must, and who always love that Preaching best that costs them least : yet I take the Dissenting way of Worship to be the best to die in, as that which is most agreeable to the Word of God, most profitable to the Soul, most suited to a renewed Nature, and which affords the sweetest Peace at Death, to such as have been sincere therein. I have often observed, that such as never regarded us or our way of Worship while in Health, have sent for us to pray for them when at the Point of Death ; shewing thereby a Desire to die the Death of the Righteous ; and was it not for that Opiate of Bread and Wine so frequently given to the worst of Men when near Death, we might chance to hear oftener from them on this account than we do.

Thus Reader, I have given thee my free Thoughts of the Sin of Schism ; and have answer'd all the Objections I have heard of, and hope we shall not appear so guilty as we have been represented, in the Eyes of those that can read this without Prejudice. I hope I shall wipe off the Reproach cast upon us, or else furnish the weakest of my Dissenting Friends with Arguments to put to silence Gainlayers ; or at least, to satisfy their own Consciences, touching the Lawfulness of our Way of Worship ; and that none may be terrified or shaken in mind, by the empty Sound of such noisy Tools, as desire nothing more than to set the Nation on a Flame.

In my Judgment, nothing hath so exposed some of us to the Charge of Schism, as this Occasional Conformity to them from whom they more generally dissent. This looks as if they thought that a total Separation amounted to no less than they are charg'd with ; and therefore, to prevent it, make their Appearance sometimes, to let 'em know theirs is not a total Separation. But this makes 'em but the more guilty ; for who can once think, that they separate from them at one time out of Conscience, who in Conscience at another time think themselves

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selves bound not to separate? If it is their Duty to join now and then, why not always? And if at all times, how is it their Duty at any time to separate from them? Let them answer this that are concern'd. For my Part, I should be loth to set up a Meeting (as well as I love them) in a Town where there is a Church I can join with, lest I should never be able to justify my so doing, to God or to Man. Halting between two Opinions is hateful to God and good Men. Saith God, *1 Kings 18. 21. by his Prophet Elijah, How long halt ye between two Opinions? If the Lord be God follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. Rev. 3. 15, 16. I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my Mouth.*

For any to join in Communion with a Church to qualify himself for a Place of Profit or Trust, is certainly one of those Abominations that God hates; for as this was not the End of its Institution, so it must needs be provoking to God, to give or receive so sacred an Ordinance in any other Manner, or to any other End than he hath appointed it. 'Tis by this Means that the Table of the Lord is grown contemptible. 'Tis sad when God's Ordinances are made to serve Mens Ends.

I am sensible, we live under great Discouragements; but I would have none of God's People go out of God's Way, but wait his time. God can soon break this Yoke. I remember a Story I have read in *Camerarius*, of a King of *Egypt*, who had taken four Kings Prisoners, and made them (instead of Horses) draw him in a Chariot of Gold; as they were drawing him, one of the Kings look'd back as if pleased; being ask'd why, he answer'd, To see the swift Motion of the Wheel, to see that part that was now uppermost so soon on the Ground, and that part which was on the Ground so soon uppermost. We have a glorious Promise to be fulfill'd, *Zech. 14. 21. And in that Day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the House of the Lord of Hosts.*

Mean time I'll conclude with the Words of good *Micah*, *Chap. 7. v. 8, 9, 10. Rejoice not against me, O mine Enemy: when I fall I shall arise: when I sit in Darknes the Lord shall be a Light unto me.*

I will bear the Indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my Cause, and execute Judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the Light, and I shall behold his Righteousness.

Then she that is mine Enemy shall see it, and Shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God? mine Eyes shall behold her: Now shall she be trodden down as the Mire of the Streets.

F I N I S.

